MATTERS of ART

Early Italian Paintings—An American Sculptor.

The Society of Illustrators is holding an exhibition of works by its members in the galleries of the National Arts Club. Later on this show is to be sent about the country under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts. Another exhibition, this time including sculptures as well as paintings, is being held by the MacDowell Club. John H. Alger, Arthur Lee, Paul Rohland and three or four others are represented. The Folsom Gallery is hung with pictures presented as "interpretations of New York life," by Jerome Myers, John Sloan, George Luks, George Bellows, William Glackens and Guy DuBois. At the Hahlo Gallery a group of about fifty etchings by Mr. D. Y. Cameron may be seen. His work has so recently been traversed in The Tribune that it is unnecessary to return in detail to the subject. It is enough to state that, being one of the strongest of modern etchers and, into the bargain, an artist with an unusually charming pictorial faculty, Cameron is always worth seeing. On this occasion, by the way, a very attractive illustrated catalogue has been provided, with a chapter from Sir Frederick Wedmore's "Etchings" reprinted as an introduction.

THE HOLDEN PICTURES.

Among the many improvements made at the Metropolitan Museum in the last few years none has proved more serviceable than the reservation of one of the best rooms in the building for the special exhibitions which now figure so significantly in our artistic life. This gallery is ideally placed and the things shown in it are always well hung. Just now it is given over to a number of early Italian paintings, the property of Mrs. L. E. Holden, of Cleveland, which are evidently to be lent for a considerable period, since the bulletin states that by and by they will be distributed in other rooms, according to schools and epochs. Mr. Bryson Burroughs, the curator of paintings, interestingly describes and catalogues the collection in the current number of the bulletin, and relates its history.

It had its origin in the enthusiastic labors of the late James Jackson Jarves. Long resident in Italy, this man of taste cherished the hope that he might promote the establishment in America of a museum for the study of Italian art. He brought together for this purpose many fine pieces. As Mr. Burroughs notes, he affixed to them names which have not by any means invariably stood the test of criticism, but "he made no pretence that the works themselves were masterpieces," and at bottom he knew what he was about. He bought genuine and good pictures, and, in certain cases, as those familiar with his pictures at Yale well know, he acquired treasures of great value. In any case, he was as a collector far in advance of his time. One rival he had, the Thomas J. Bryan who gave his paintings to the New York Historical Society in 1867, but otherwise he stood alone as an amateur of early Italian art. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was disappointed in his high hopes of persuading his countrymen to give some sort of public support to the subject nearest his heart. The upshot of his noble scheme and the manner in which the Holden collection came into being are thus described:

> Mr. Jarves's idea that a museum be formed which would acquire his collection as a basis unfortunately miscarried. On his return to America he exhibited his pictures in 1860 at the Derby Gallery, No. 625 Broadway, New York, and again in 1862 at the New York Historical Society rooms, hoping to interest influential people in his plan, but the time was unfavorable, the interest and energies of the public being engaged far otherwise. In 1863 he vainly offered one hundred and thirty-two of his pictures to the New York Historical Society for $50,000. He found no one to second his design, and even after the Civil War his success was no better. He was forced to deposit the greater number of his pictures with the trustees of Yale College as a pledge for a loan which the college made him. Being unable to meet his obligations, the pictures became the property of the college.
>
> Among the pictures offered to the Historical Society in 1863, the only one which can be definitely connected with those now owned by Mrs. Holden, was the Madonna and Child attributed to Leonardo, Number 53 in the Holden catalogue and Number 17 in this exhibition. The Boston exhibition in 1883-1884 was made up of works which for some reason were not deposited at Yale, and others which it may be presumed were acquired later. This was the collection bought by Mr. Holden in 1884.

Let it be said at once that it is not a great collection. The twenty-seven paintings shown at the Museum may be best characterized, in a nutshell, as interesting rather than important. But their interest goes deep, carrying us back into close contact with some of the most engaging elements in the history of Italian art. The subjects, of course, are mostly religious, treated with the naïve simplicity of the earlier Renaissance, and the traits that lie on the surface everywhere are the sweet sentiment, the gentle naturalism, and the refined manner which belong peculiarly to the Florentine school. Developments typical of other regions are illustrated in more than one of these paintings, but the prevailing atmosphere is that of the Tuscan primitives.

It is a very delicate atmosphere and in one respect it has fared a little hard at the hands of time, so far as this particular collection is concerned. Repeatedly, in the too sleek character of a surface or in the notation of some detail, we suspect the intervention of an old hand more zealous than discreet. Take, for example, the first picture encountered on entering the gallery and turning to the left, the "Madonna and Child," attributed to a painter of the school of Luini. Touches of repainting rather than the original work would seem to account for a quality in the tone unduly heavy and nerveless for even a minor craftsman in that debonair Milanese circle, and it is fair to surmise also that in its pristine state the types in the composition had a tenderer suavity than they possess today. It would be interesting to know just what has happened to these pictures, whether they have remained quite untouched since 1884, and if it is, therefore, to the period of Jarves' ownership that we must ascribe whatever cleaning or retouching they have undergone. There are instances of what looks like restoration even earlier than any which Jarves could have known about. In the background of the "Virgin and Child," by Lorenzo di Credi, there is an architectural motive hardly suggesting the hand which drew the figure of the Madonna.

But this painting, by the way, is a perfect example of what constitutes the charm of the collection. It may not be a full-rounded masterpiece, but it is, in its way, exquisite. There is a great linear distinction about the head of the Madonna, and not only in the face but in the hair and wimple the color is of pure loveliness all compact. The painting here is as blond as honey, almost, and as delightfully transparent. This is one of the major things in the collection, and with it we would place the "Madonna and Child," by Francesco Botticini, in which the rosy bodice of the Madonna seems fairly to glow, suffusing the whole picture with a soft radiance. The student will note in this the curious power of the early Florentines to endue their religious figures with a grave dignity while portraying them in almost artlessly intimate mood. Arresting, too, is the pure draftsmanship, so redolent of a formal tradition and yet so much finer in expression than one would expect formalism to permit. That is the secret of the early Italians, their fusion of a style classical in its austerity with an emotion as candid and as wholesomely penetrating as are the airs of spring. Turn to the majestic "Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints," by Lorenzo da San Severino. The Madonna, in her brocaded robe, is a sufficiently hieratic figure, set with weightiness in a carved chair before a background of pue gold, but while she is lost in reposeful abstraction the Child leans forward as though ready to leap from her arm, and the kneeling saint toward whom the little hand is outstretched is a figure of very nearly domestic naturalness. Here in movement, gesture and physiognomy the artist affirms the fundamental vitality of his school, the human instinct which governed all its flights.

It is a point well to keep in mind, for in these days of oracular "connoisseurship," when the essence of a work of art is sacrificed to the glib discussion of what, if we may risk the Hibernicism, we may call non-existent profundities, the true value of paintings like these is often forgotten. In the present exhibition there are temptations, it is true, to touch upon one or two questions of attribution. There is the "Madonna and Child," given to the school of Leonardo da Vinci. Mr. Burroughs remarks that "none of the specialists of to-day considers this beautiful little picture to be by the hand of Leonardo." It is difficult to see why it should be associated even with his school, for while the traits of the figures are Leonardesque enough, the whole affair is terribly heavy handed. On the whole, however, there is little occasion for deviation into controversy. To another problem we will return below, but the main point is to testify to the fragrant beauty with which these souvenirs of the historic South fill the room. We have alluded to the preponderance of religious themes, and in addition to those examples already cited we would signalize the stately "Madonna and Child" of the late fourteenth century, with its quaintly robust figure of Eve reclining in the lower panel; the bewitching "Madonna Adoring the Child, Attended by Angels," a painting dating from the late fifteenth century; the richly, even unctuously, painted "Death of the Virgin," by Polidoro Lanzani; the dramatic "Pieta," by Leandro Bassano, and the very handsome, opulently colored "Virgin, Child and Saints," by Filippo da Verona. But the collection has other and very beguiling aspects.

There is an amusing fifteenth century cassone, representing a horse race in the streets of Florence. There is a "Procession from a Castle," a fragment ascribed to Bernadino Parenzano, which delightfully illustrates the old Italian application of realistic motives to a decorative purpose. There is a small but very characteristic "Sketch for a Ceiling," by Tiepolo. There is a large allegorical piece, "Summer and Autumn," which Dr. Valentiner and Mr. Burroughs shrewdly connect with a drawing by Hendrick Goltzius. This last surmise is certainly more persuasive than any pointing to an Italian origin. Several portraits also appear, among them a fine "Giuliano de' Medici," attributed to Salviati, and a head of a Florentine doctor, possibly by Justus of Ghent, which has its merits but is of no great significance. In one of the portraits, the best of them all, there is material for some rather piquant speculation. This is the double portrait, "A Gentleman and His Wife," which is ascribed to Giovanni Battista Moroni. It is a question whether it was not painted, instead, by Antonio Moro.

MORONI OR MORO?

The similarity between the names of the two men might easily have caused an error in the making of some old inventory, and this error might as easily have been perpetuated through the force of other circumstances. They were contemporaries, and so dealt in the same costumes. Furthermore, in style the Italian painter and the master of the Low Countries have, superficially, more than one point in common. But closely scrutinized each reveals an individual habit, and the painting at the museum is in various ways more suggestive of Moro than of Moroni. The method of the latter has about it a certain freedom and softness. His brushwork is very modern. Now Moro, who could paint with great power, nevertheless discloses in everything that he did a keener, drier linear quality than characterizes Moroni, and it is this quality that marks the Holden portrait. It comes out in the structure of the heads, it is visible also in the details of costume, and it shows particularly in the drawing of the four hands. These, moreover, illustrate in the tapering fingers a trait that is constant in Moro and that Moroni far less frequently exhibits. Both in their form and in their placing the hands of the woman in the Holden picture are eloquent of what you find over and over again in the feminine portraits of Moro. Finally, in the portrait of the man, there are details inclining us to hazard the opinion that we have here not only a piece of painting by Moro, but a portrait of the artist himself.

There are two portraits of him from his own brush well known abroad. One, showing him seated before his easel, well on in years, is in the Uffizi. The other, painted in his prime, is a three-quarter length in which he stands with one hand resting upon the neck of a dog. It is in the collection of Lord Spencer, at Althorp. Comparing this Althorp portrait with that in the Holden collection, one resemblance after another jumps to the eye, the differences seeming only of that slight nature which would naturally be accounted for by the difference in age. Moro, if for the sake of argument we may take him to be the painter of the Holden portrait, is therein a young man, only thirty-five, as the lettering in the corner states. The hair falling over his brow defines there a line which is changed in the later portrait only as increasing years might be expected to change it. Modifications in beard and mustache may be explained in the same way. If the nose in the later portrait is a trifle bonier, if the eyes are a little deeper set, if the ear is a little less firm, it is for the same reason. The man in both portraits wears his ruff with the same air and, in fact, in his whole dress and carriage seems the same individual. It is an odd point that the chain which Moro wears in the earlier portrait comes well up around his neck, because it is in three loops, whereas the identical chain, worn in the later portrait, there hangs lower down because it is worn in two loops. One lingers over this matter of the chain, not only because the effects of the different looping so neatly jump with our theory, but because a valuable chain is precisely the thing that Moro would have preserved from his young manhood and would have sported in the fifties, the period of the Althorp portrait, as he sported it in his thirties.

The sword hilt showing in both portraits looks also the same in them both, the swerving line which appears in one and not in the other being explainable on grounds of perspective. It is striking, furthermore, to note the similarity between the two belts to which the sword is attached, and especially at the wearer's back, where in both cases a knob of metal peeps forth. Still more important does our comparison become when we leave accessories and return to anatomical details, studying the hands. A certain squareness across the right hand at the knuckles, and the long tapering fingers which we find in both portraits, give the finishing touches to a most alluring hypothesis so far as details can give them. As for the general character of the subject our impression is pretty nearly conclusive. It would seem almost certain that the painter who portrayed himself at thirty-five in the Holden portrait could not but have portrayed himself at fifty or thereabouts exactly as in Lord Spencer's superb work. If our surmise is correct the Holden portrait should take on a doubly interesting status. A new Moro by itself would be worth having, but a new Moro that was also a new portrait of the master, showing him young, as we have never seen him before, and with his wife beside him, would be an addition to the mass of his productions for which students of his art would be peculiarly grateful.

NICHOLAS HILLIARD.
(From the miniature by himself.)

THE PEACE PLEDGE.
(From the relief by J. Q. A. Ward.)

J. Q. A. WARD.

American sculpture owes much to the modeller of "The Indian Hunter" in Central Park, and the "General Washington" which stands beneath the shadow of the Sub-Treasury in New York. He was one of our pioneers and from his youth, when he served a devoted apprenticeship in the studio of Henry Kirke Brown, he followed and effectively illustrated a sterling ideal. It is fitting that he should be commemorated in some permanent form and readers will welcome therefore the monograph by Mrs. Herbert Adams, "John Quincy Adams Ward: An Appreciation," which was written for the National Sculpture Society and has been published by that body as a memorial of its late Honorary President. Herself the wife of a sculptor, Mrs. Adams has been peculiarly qualified to enter into the spirit of her subject. She knows the atmosphere of the studio. Her book is full of knowledge and sympathy. It is to be inferred, too, that personal friendship with Ward has contributed to her understanding of his work. But what is most admirable about this study is its testimony to an insight having nothing to do with professional or personal relations. This biographer has the imaginative power which is so important to the critic if he is to penetrate to the heart of his theme, and, in consequence, we have here more than one saying exactly interpretative of Ward's essential quality.

It was from first to last profoundly masculine. Speaking of the range of his art, Mrs. Adams notes that those who knew him only in the monumental work of his later years have been surprised to come upon small objects exquisitely modelled by him. She recalls a little bell of silver, with figures in high relief, which she characterizes as a marvel of delicate beauty. We wish, by the way, that some of these minor productions of Ward's might have been included among the excellent illustrations gathered together at the back of the book. But it was, of course, to problems of monumental sculpture that he chiefly addressed himself, and Mrs. Adams rightly lays stress upon this aspect of his work. "Male, in the highest sense," she says, "are his most characteristic works—the Washington, the Beecher, the Garfield, the Shakespeare, the Thomas. . . . Few have equalled Ward in setting forth the Man, the virile, real, active presence in the world that lies about us." His success in this matter is traceable to a dual source, to an inborn habit of mind and the intense Americanism which pervaded it. Ward's personality was precisely what one would have expected to find behind the simple force of his work. Thinking of him one thinks of what Arnold loved to praise in Byron, a splendid sincerity and strength. It is well observed by Mrs. Adams that "to the man in him as well as to the artist, he owed the recognition the years began to bring," and she brings the very image of Ward before us when she goes on to say that "the practical working heroic qualities of a man were his—honesty, enthusiasm, common sense, mental and physical vigor." With these traits he was predestined to wreak his art upon the portrayal of American men with an unerring instinct for character. When he portrayed leaders like Washington, Greeley and Beecher, he carried his expression of their individualities not only into his study of face and figure but into his very technique and style. A robust simplicity was his leading characteristic in his art as in his life.

A DISTINCTION.

It gave his work dignity and character. Did it also make his work beautiful? The question cannot be answered without the exposition of certain distinctions. There is sculptural beauty of a high order in the "General Washington." The statue is beautiful in composition, the effects of line and mass are beautifully interwoven and in his treatment of surface Ward shows here also his sensitiveness as a modeller. But that sensitiveness is decidedly not so apparent in all of his works and one result of this is that while his monuments are impressive they lack the last compelling beauty which spells genius. One may find a clue to the cause of his failure to scale the topmost heights in a brief passage which Mrs. Adams gives to the sculptor's broad attitude toward his material. She says:

> He was attracted by the valor and the vigor and the forthrightness of the many-sided art of the Italian Renaissance, rather than by its subtleties. He scarcely shares Leonardo's passion for the strangenesses that are to be found in things. His excursions and discoveries and inventions are all in the broad field of normal wholesome life. If his point of view misses something of the unusual, the novel, it is because he is frankly out of sympathy with the abnormal, the eccentric. Had he been painter instead of sculptor, his broad artistic sympathy would probably have admitted the extreme charm of Leonardo's masterpiece, and his own characteristic gifts of expression would have been ill adapted to a four years' study of La Gioconda's smile.

Our clew is there, though not, perhaps, through any willing intervention on the part of Mrs. Adams. We wonder, rather, if she has not unconsciously sought in this instance to make the best of a somewhat embarrassing point. At all events, it is plain that when Ward remained untouched by the subtleties of the Italian Renaissance it was not from his preoccupation with "normal, wholesome life," but because the feeling of grace and charm, for the beauty that is recondite and impalpable, was left out of his artistic composition. It is more than true that "his characteristic gifts of expression would have been ill adapted to a four years' study of La Gioconda's smile." It is doubtful if the study of a lifetime would have brought him into complete sympathy with that smile. He would have "admitted" its charm, as Mrs. Adams says, but the word we quote is in itself an admission. Ward would never have *felt* the Italian's magic. The distinction follows us as we traverse his long and fruitful career. It was marked by noble achievements which will long be honored, but it did not embrace any of those emotional and imaginative exploits which stir the spirit, or any of those technical developments which indicate a pursuit of beauty for its own sake. To recognize these facts is not to lessen appreciation of his art, but only to clarify it.

THE WALPOLE SOCIETY.

Something over a year ago this society was founded in London, with the object of promoting the study of the history of British art. The intention was to do away with the idea that the National School of Painting was a sudden and unaccountable birth in the eighteenth century, by the publication of such documents as would prove the value of certain earlier activities. We are not sure that in the long run any very serious omissions will be discovered in the familiar history of the subject. Apart from their architecture, which has owed so much to foreign influence, the British have not been an artistic people.

The first annual volume of the Walpole Society is a thin, well illustrated folio. Five papers are contributed and one old document is brought to light. Mr. Finberg's discussion of Turner's "Isle of Wight Sketch Book" has its value for the Turnerian, and the accompanying plates are welcome, but neither this nor the sheaf of notes on an early portrait by Reynolds seems quite to fit into the general scheme. These things might have appeared anywhere. In view of the Walpole Society's programme the same space might more appropriately have been given to older themes. More to the point are some notes by Mr. W. R. Lethaby on London and Westminster painters in the Middle Ages. He makes, to be sure, too large a claim for the old decorators, whose work survives only in sparse fragments. "In England at the end of the thirteenth century," he says, "we had brother craftsmen of Duccio, Cimabue and Giotto." One may recognize worthy elements in the paintings here reproduced in colors from water color copies by Mr. E. W. Tristram and still be disinclined to take those mediæval Britons very seriously. In sculpture the earlier periods were richer. Professor E. S. Prior offers "A Sketch of English Mediæval Figure Structure," generously illustrated from photographs, in which material drawn from the great cathedrals is demonstrated to possess substantial artistic value. But the one outstanding item in this volume is the hitherto unpublished manuscript mentioned above.

NICHOLAS HILLIARD.

This is the treatise on miniature painting written by Nicholas Hilliard, the first English master of the art, which has long been treasured in the library at Edinburgh University. He wrote at the request of Richard Haydocke, the physician who in 1598 published a translation of Lomazzo's "Traddado." Haydocke, who thought his friend worthy of comparison with Raphael, was convinced also that he could use a "learned pencell," and Hilliard was nothing loath. Forthwith he put together a few pages of curious information and still more curious diction, incidentally scattering here and there some amusing recollections. His point of view is charming. Among the ancient Romans, he avers, it was decreed that the art of painting should be taught to gentlemen only, and he blandly conjectures that this must have been because no man could make a living at so leisurely a task. And for "limning," his own peculiar pursuit, he is especially solicitous:

> Now, therefor, I wish it weare so that none should medle with limning but gentelmen alone, for that it is a kind of gentill painting of less subjection than any other; for one may leave it when hee will, his coullers nor his work taketh any harme by it. Moreover it is secreet, a man may usse it and scarsle by perseaved of his owne folke; it is sweet and cleanly to usse, and it is a thing apart from all other painting or drawing, and tendeth not to comon mens usse either for furnishing of howsses or any patternes for tapistries, or building, or any other worke whatsoever and yet it excelleth all other painting whatsoever in sondry points, in giving the true lustur to pearle and precious stone, and worketh the metal gold or silver with themselves, which so enricheth and innobleth the worke that it seemeth to be the thinge itself, even the worke of God and not of man, benning fittest for the decking of princes bookes or to put in jeuuells of gould and for the imitation of the purest flowers and most beautifulle creatures in the finest and purest coullures which are chargable, and is for the service of noble persons very neat in small voloms in privat maner for theem to have the portraits and pictures of themselves.

As this passage might suggest, the treatise does not make the easiest reading in the world, and it must be confessed that the modern miniaturist can get along very well without the counsel of his Elizabethan predecessor. Nevertheless the lumbering sentences are worth following, for they revive the atmosphere of the past, helping us to realize the spirit and methods of an old master. Mr. Philip Norman's long introductory note does much to clarify the quaint manuscript, and the latter is illustrated with some striking reproductions from portraits by Hilliard. Text and picture admirably exemplify the sort of thing which the Walpole Society can do to illuminate forgotten byways in the history of British art.

LA TOUR.

At the recent sale of the Doucet collection in Paris one of the sensations of that very sensational event was provided by the fierce competition for the works of Maurice-Quentin de La Tour. They fetched incredible prices and were for a little while the talk of the town. The subject has been revived by the Société de Reproductions des Dessins de Maitres in a portfolio containing six of the famous "Preparations" of the great pastellist. These preliminary studies, which he was wont to make in great numbers, have an interest in no wise inferior to that of his finished portraits, and, indeed, they are sometimes of even greater value, because of their possession of a more spontaneous, more personal, quality. They give his first impression of a sitter and are often extraordinarily vivid. We reproduce from the Société portfolio a "Portrait of a Woman," in the collection of M. David Weill. It has been tentatively identified as the portrait of a noted eighteenth century actress, Mlle. Dangeville, of the Theatre Français. While we await the conclusion of the matter we may enjoy the individuality of this animated face. La Tour is always beguilingly human. Quantities of his portarits are without the names of the sitters, but one is hardly concerned with the fact. His personages, whoever they may be, have always something to say to us that is their own. This raciness of La Tour's, almost incongruous in view of the fragile nature of his medium and the decorative tendency of his style, is explained both by his sheer power as an artist and by his everyday, familiar characteristics. He was a man of salient originality, a courtier, but not in the smallest degree a creature of convention. He was always drawing his own portrait, and when doing this he not seldom laughed. Thus he faced life, gayly and naturally. Lady Dilke cites a contemporary description of him, "carrying his head high, his eyes bright and full of fire, the oval of his face cleanly cut, his thin lips showing a ready turn for criticism." The eager, clever soul of him passed into his art.

R. C.

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN.
(From the study by La Tour.)